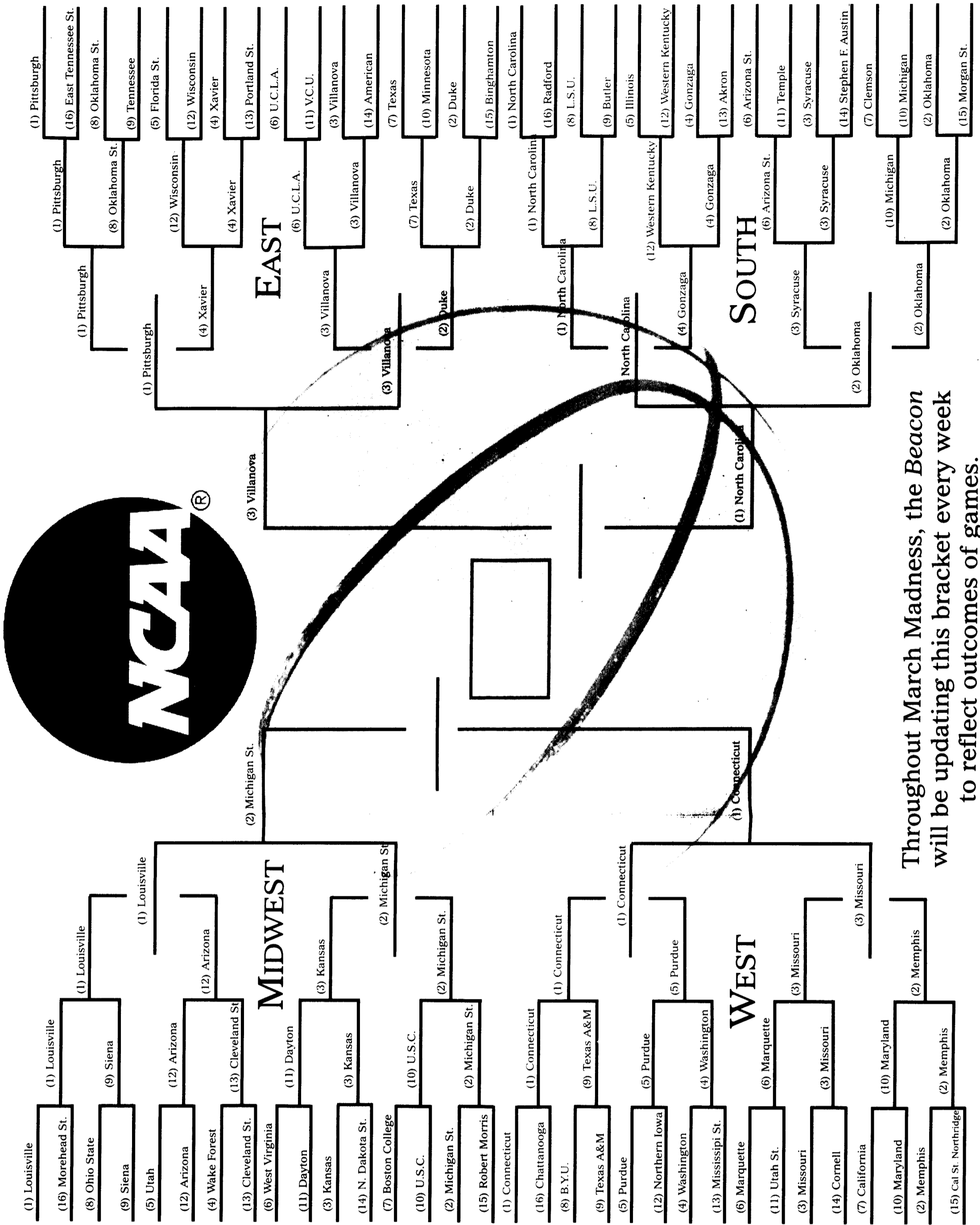


SPORTS



Throughout March Madness, the Beacon will be updating this bracket every week to reflect outcomes of games.

Bracket by Connor Sattely for the Behrend Beacon

Penn State captures NIT Championship

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The Penn State Nittany Lions are the 2009 National Invitational Tournament Champions.

On Thursday April 2, the Nittany Lions defeated the Baylor Bears 69-63 for the NIT Championship. The championship victory was the first for the Lions in school history.

"Give me everything you have," said head coach Ed DeChellis, according to the Penn State Athletic website. "If it's good enough, it's good enough; if it's not, it's not. Just leave it all on the floor."

Senior Jamelle Cornley played tough underneath scoring 18 points for the game and earned the tournament's most valuable player. Cornley ended his career as a champion. Sophomore Talor Battle added 12 points for the Lions.

"You don't know what it's going to be like when you go into it," said Cornley, according

to the Penn State Athletic website. "The last time I cut down the nets was the state championship my freshman year of high school. To cut down some more nets in my last game is just an unbelievable feeling."

At halftime the Bears led 25-29.

After Baylor coach Scott Drew received a technical foul the Lions surged to take a 50-40 lead with 8:20 left in the second half.

According to the Penn State Athletic website, head coach Ed DeChellis said, "We have tough kids. We're going to go compete. That's been our trademark all year. That play typifies what our team has been like all year."

The Bears made it a seven point game with a tip in by the Bear's leading scorer sophomore LaceDarius Dunn with 4:34 remaining in the game. Dunn finished the game with

18 points.

The game was a physical battle, which was proven when senior Danny Morrissey left the game with 2:45 remaining after smashing his head against the floor as he dove for a loose ball.

With 1:36 left, the Lions lead the Bears by nine after Battle knocked down a deep two-point jumper.

The Bears wouldn't go quietly, but the Lions secured the victory by hitting important free throws.

"Penn State had a great following, a great crowd, and they're the ones who hit big shots and won the game," said Baylor coach Scott Drew, according to the Penn State Athletic website. "As a coach you never feel bad about that, when a team plays great and wins the game."

The game was played at Madison Square Garden in

New York City. Thirty-six buses full of Penn State students dressed in white made the four-hour trip to witness the game.

The Lions ended the season with a 27-11 record. The 27 wins is a record high of wins for Penn State.

The Lions merely missed making the NCAA Tournament on Selection Sunday this year, but entered the NIT as a number two seed.

The road to the NIT Championship game did not come at ease. The Lions began the tournament of 32 by defeating George Mason in overtime 77-73. Battle hit a fade away shot in regulation to force overtime and finished the game with 24 points.

In the second round the Lions played at State College against Rhode Island and defeated them for a second time this season. The final

score was 83-72.

The Lions then traveled to Florida to beat the Florida Gators 71-62. Cornley led both teams with 23 points and 12 rebounds.

The semi-final game was played last Tuesday night at the Madison Square Garden where they faced the Fighting Irish of Notre Dame. Battle led the team with 17 points. Andrew Jones contributed a career high, 16 points, and added 15 rebounds.

Sixteen buses made the trip to New York from State College for the semi-final game. The bus carried students along with football head coach Joe Paterno.

It was only the second time in school history Penn State had reached the NIT Championship game. The first time resulted in a loss to Minnesota in 1998.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Senior Jamelle Cornley celebrates the victory.